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DEPARTMENT OF STATE Attention Miss Mullet
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Washington, D.C. 20520

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September 1, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Coup in Libya

A group of young Libyan military officers carried out an early morning coup in Libya this morning "to rid the country of graft and corruption" and proclaimed "the Arab Republic of Libya." The group seized power with relatively little fighting in the country's three main administrative centers, Tripoli, Benghazi and Baida. Ports, airports and apparently oil terminals are closed.

Reports are still fragmentary but no serious challenge to the revolutionary group has yet emerged. The 80-year old King, who in the past has threatened abdication, is on vacation in Turkey. Crown Prince Hassan ar-Ridha, has reportedly announced over Radio Libya his own abdication and his support for the new regime.

Americans in Libya have been alerted by our Embassy to remain at home but seem to be in no physical danger. Nor does there appear to be any threat to Wheelus Air Base, but as a precaution we have sent back to Europe all training aircraft (F-4's). This leaves at Wheelus the permanent aircraft complement of 11 F-100's and 7 helicopters.

Our Charge, along with representatives of the British, French and Soviet Embassies, was convoked by a young Army captain who told them that the coup was carried out for purely internal reasons, that the new government wished to honor all treaties and

Sincerely
Theodore L. Eliot

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None

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agreements (including oil agreements) and that the Embassies need have no fear for the safety of their nationals resident in Libya. Similarly reassuring statements have been made over the Libyan radio. The American community in Libya numbers approximately 10,000 including 5000 military personnel and dependents at Wheelus Air Base.

The only name that has so far been announced by the regime is that of the new Army chief of staff, a little known retired army colonel, abu Shawaarib. No prominent Libyan personality has yet been identified with the new regime.

We have talked by telephone with our Embassy in London. The British Government is following the situation with intense interest, but for the present at least is not inclined to become active in it in any way. We also feel at this point that the US should not try to become involved.

This position would have to be reviewed if (1) a physical threat to American lives and property should develop (2) the King decides to oppose the coup and asks for US and British assistance, and/or (3) the new regime unexpectedly toughens its position toward Wheelus Air Base and American oil interests. We will remain in close touch with the British in our continuing assessment of the situation.

Theodore L. Eliot Jr.

Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.
Executive Secretary

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